

NOTES ON THE GENUS *NEOPTINUS* GAHAN (=*PTINOSPHAERUS* BELLÉS AND LAWRENCE) (COLEOPTERA: PTINIDAE)

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Abstract

Ptinospaerus is considered to be synonymous with *Neoptinus* (syn. n.). The Australian *N. marginicollis* (Bellés and Lawrence), comb. n., is compared to *N. parvus* Gahan from Christmas Island, Indian Ocean, and notes are given on the habitat of the latter (in pith of dead *Scaevola* L. stems).

Introduction

The genus *Neoptinus* is based on the species *N. parvus*, described by Gahan (1900) from a specimen collected by C. W. Andrews on the east coast of Christmas Island, Indian Ocean, in 1897. Pic (1912) considered the genus to be incertae sedis and commented on its resemblance to the sphindid genus *Aspidiphorus* Latreille, a fact that contributed to its being overlooked by later workers. Bellés and Lawrence (1984) described the genus and species *Ptinospaerus marginicollis* from a beach near Iron Range, on the Cape York Peninsula, northern Queensland. During a recent entomological survey of Christmas Island conducted by the Division of Entomology, C.S.I.R.O., one of us (JFL) collected a series of about 250 specimens of *N. parvus* near Waterfall on the northeast coast of the island. A comparison of this species with *P. marginicollis* showed that the two were congeneric, sharing the following diagnostic features: 1) 9-segmented antennae, 2) antennal insertions moderately widely separated, 3) prothorax with sharp lateral edges, and 4) ventrite 4 very narrow and arcuate behind.

Genus *Neoptinus* Gahan

Neoptinus Gahan, 1900: 102. Type species: *N. parvus* Gahan, by monotypy.

Ptinospaerus Bellés and Lawrence, 1984: 35. **syn. n.** Type species: *P. marginicollis* Bellés and Lawrence, by original designation.

Neoptinus is most closely related to *Pitnus* Gorham, with which it shares such features as the 9-segmented antennae (8-segmented in *Pitnus australiae* Lea), wide interantennal space, sharply narrowed abdomen, narrow and arcuate 4th ventrite, simple, Y-shaped (open) male genital segment, and basic structure of the aedeagus. It differs from *Pitnus* and from all other ptinid genera in having a short, broad prothorax with sharp lateral edges.

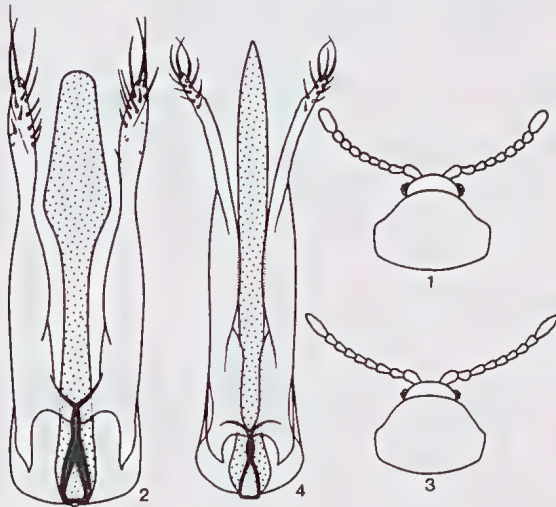
Key to the species of *Neoptinus*

1. Antennae robust, with segments 5 to 8 as long as wide, 9 subcylindrical, blunt at apex (Fig. 1); elytral pubescence consisting of yellow hairs which are decumbent in punctures and semierect in intervals; median lobe of aedeagus (in dorsal view) strongly lanceolate and rounded at apex (Fig. 2)
 *N. parvus*
- Antennae slender, with segments 5 to 8 longer than wide, 9 subacuminate at apex (Fig. 3). Elytral pubescence consisting of white hairs which are semierect both in punctures and in intervals. Median lobe of aedeagus (in dorsal view) with parallel sides and acutely pointed at apex (Fig. 4)
 *N. marginicollis*

Neoptinus parvus Gahan

Neoptinus parvus Gahan, 1900: 103, pl. 10, fig. 10.

About 250 adults and 3 larvae were collected in dead stems of the strand plant *Scaevola sericea* M. Vahl near Waterfall on the northeast coast of Christmas Island (10°27'S, 105°42'E) on 27 April 1989 by J.F. Lawrence (deposited in the Australian National Insect Collection, C.S.I.R.O., British Museum (Natural History), London, and the collection of X. Bellés). The specimens agree with Gahan's description, except for the length which varies from 1.1 to 1.5 mm.



Figs 1-4. Figs 1, 2, *Neoptinus parvus*: 1, head and prothorax, dorsal; 2, aedeagus, dorsal; Figs 3, 4, *Neoptinus marginicollis*: 3, head and prothorax, dorsal; 4, aedeagus, dorsal.

Selected specimens were compared with Gahan's type by C. M. F. von Hayek and found to be conspecific. The beetles were feeding in the pith of the dead *Scaevola* stems, forming extensive mines beneath the surface. Only three larvae were found, but many of the adults were reddish-brown in colour, indicating that they had recently emerged and were still teneral.

***Neoptinus marginicollis* (Bellés and Lawrence), comb. n.**

Ptinospaerus marginicollis Bellés and Lawrence, 1984: 35.

In addition to the characters given in the key, *N. marginicollis* differs from *N. parvus* in having somewhat smaller eyes, shorter lateral pronotal carinae (see Figs 1 and 3), more distinct pronotal punctation and slightly more elongate elytra. Although the collector did not recall the exact circumstances of capture (and said in a letter that they might have been among seaweed), it is likely that *N. marginicollis* also occurs in the stems of *Scaevola sericea*, which is also a common strand plant in tropical northern Queensland (Cribb and Cribb 1985).

Acknowledgements

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